



Quarterly Report
ALBANIA: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND
PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
October 1 – December 31, 2000

I. SUMMARY

Albania's local elections on October 1, while not without flaws, was generally a positive step forward in the country's democratic development as the country established its first permanent voter registry and conducted an election day free of violence. The Socialist Party (PS) won a resounding victory throughout the country, wresting local-level dominance away from the Democratic Party (PD). Since November, PD street demonstrations against the administration of the elections have continued in Tirana. Several political leaders in Albania have called into question the capability of the Central Election Commission due to its deficient performance in meeting deadlines and communicating developments to the public regarding the local elections. The political climate remains tense in advance of parliamentary contests due in the first half of 2001.

Albania's democratic development is grounded in political parties that are responsive to and representative of citizen's interests and operate within a constructive political party framework, and a citizenry engaged in the political process to effect positive change. The program conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) operates on three fronts to address these pressing political and civic challenges: the Institute's Political Leadership Development Program trains emerging political party leaders in party development and communication with citizens; NDI's Civic Forum Program facilitates discussion groups with more than 600 citizens on topics related to democratic development in order to build advocacy skills so that citizens can effectively organize to address community problems; and NDI's technical assistance to the Society for Democratic Culture (SDC) helps the organization bolster its election monitoring activities.

In this period, NDI accomplished the following:

- Conducted an advanced skills seminar on ethics and coalition building with participants from the first and second round of the Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP);
- Gathered input from political party officials and activists on a 2001 ZHUP program that will train political party activists at the local level;

- Produced and circulated the first in a series of ZHUP newsletters for distribution among program participants, political party officials, and the international community;
- Conducted civic forum discussion groups on the role of the Albanian education system in democratic development, human rights in democracy and the role of unions in a democracy; and
- NDI Kosovo Resident Representative Koebel Price and field coordinator Violeta Hamidi traveled to Albania to conduct training sessions on advocacy and issue identification strategies with Albania Civic Forum field coordinators.

II. BACKGROUND

Local elections in October marked a significant step forward in Albania's democratic development, but overall the country continues to be hampered by political polarization, exacerbated by non-constructive opposition activity. For the first time, Albania worked with a permanent voter register and the campaign and election day itself were marked with remarkably few isolated incidents of violence. Despite these advances, the Central Election Commission (CEC) missed several deadlines and was criticized for being non-transparent in communicating its decisions to political officials and the public. In addition, the Democratic Party's intransigent leadership continues to hamper Albania's democratic development through the boycott of key political institutions and processes, and increasingly violent street demonstrations. These actions have led several observers to speculate that the PD may boycott parliamentary elections in 2001, potentially further retarding democratic development.

Voter lists became a central point of contention in advance of the local elections. Opposition parties charged that several of their members were excluded from the list compiled during the door-to door enumeration process. The CEC encouraged citizens to check their names on these publicly posted lists to ensure inclusion and even extended the deadline for revisions to the list. The CEC, in an effort to assuage the concerns of these political actors and citizens, decided to allow the use of a "complementary" or "B list" of voters in addition to the door-to door list that was compiled and revised during the summer. The "B list" included all registered voters over the age of 18 whose names were found on the original civil registry database but who had not been identified during enumeration. If one's name was on either list, he or she would be eligible to cast a ballot. NDI's pre-election assessment mission addressed this issue in its report:

The CEC should also consider additional measures for including on the voter lists persons who may have been excluded because they were not at home when enumerators visited. In addition, immediate and vigorous investigation must be pursued of all cases where persons who received coupons as proof of enumeration and who were somehow not included on the list.

The Democratic Party carried its disagreement regarding the election administration into the post-election period. As seen in the election law, if a mayoral candidate did not win 50 percent of the vote on October 1, a second round of elections would be required for those seats

on October 15. The PD boycotted these contests throughout Albania, citing fraudulent voter lists, voter intimidation and ballot manipulation in the first round. The second round of balloting commenced as scheduled, however, and was calm and without incident, except for Himara, a municipality on the southern coast with a large Greek-speaking population. Controversy surrounding allegations of Greek politicians actively campaigning on behalf of the minority-based Human Rights Party (HRP) candidates sparked tension at polling stations throughout the municipality.

The final election results showed the following percentage breakdown:

- Socialist Party and allied parties: 43.04%
- Democratic party and allies: 33.56%
- Social Democratic Party: 7.11%
- Democratic Alliance: 3.13%
- Christian Democratic Party: 2.34%
- Human Rights Party: 2.28%
- United Right: 2.1%
- Agrarian Party: 1.54%

The PD loss in the elections has prompted several opposition party officials to reassess the state of center right politics in Albania. The Reform Movement of the Democratic Party, led by Genc Pollo, while not a factor in the local elections may emerge as a significant force in opposition to the “official” PD. Several parties on the right have also publicly considered creating a parliamentary group to rival the PD, a measure that illustrates the diminished stature of the once unassailable power of Berisha’s party. Since the elections, PD street demonstrations, populated by allegedly paid activists, have turned violent on several occasions, exposing the desperation of a party that can no longer produce at the ballot box.

NDI’s Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP) provides a multiparty group of emerging political party leaders with practical training on party development, election preparation, political ethics, political message development, coalition building, fund-raising and voter contact. Indirectly, the program has built informal relationships among members of disparate political parties, providing them a neutral forum to share ideas and viewpoints. Through NDI’s Civic Forum program, many citizens who felt disconnected from their government as a result of past political and governmental controversies attend civic education discussion groups in order to improve their communities over time through the democratic system. Finally, NDI’s technical assistance to SDC improves its domestic monitoring and organizational capabilities in Albania.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Political Leadership Development Program

ZHUP participants were very active in their respective parties’ political campaigns for the local elections, and some won elective office.

Advanced ZHUP Seminar

During the quarter, NDI conducted a seminar with participants from both rounds of the Political Leadership Development Program on coalition building and legislative ethics. This training also offered the ZHUP participants an opportunity to gather and share experiences from the local election campaign. Two NDI trainers, Johan Hamels, a former parliamentarian and leader of the Green Party from Belgium, and Hans-Achim Roll, a former German Bundestag staff member who played a critical role in building governing coalitions in 1994, conducted this training.

Roll and Hamels contributed complementary presentations on the role of negotiations and coalition building in politics and governing. They used examples from the Harvard Negotiations' Project "Getting to Yes" and included a role play with participants breaking into teams for a simulation of the EU Association Agreement that are expected to begin in autumn 2001.

Both Hamels and Roll conducted sessions on ethics, specifically on combating corruption, and shared several examples of their respective experiences in Germany, Belgium, Georgia and Macedonia.

Hamels' discussion on corruption in Georgia was particularly effective given that Georgia and Albania rank together in Transparency International's Corruption Index (84th). In Georgia, a wide-ranging and compulsory system of financial declaration was considered counterproductive, so instead a gradual process was adopted. This session was followed by a small groups exercise on ways to combat corruption in Albania. The groups' findings included legislation, internal provisions to ensure compliance, external monitoring and the development of an "anti-corruption test" for local municipalities.

Roll presented his anti-corruption efforts in Macedonia by explaining that corruption should be battled in the executive branches of government, among ministers and civil servants. He outlined several methods that transitional democracies try to use in ensuring compliance with the standards they have set for their executives. He stressed that transparency was key in combating corruption, but technical training was also necessary for those government officials required to follow ethical codes to ensure compliance.

NDI ZHUP participant Arben Hoxha, who conducted a successful code of conduct negotiation among political parties in Korça before the October local elections, made a presentation on the methods employed to conduct this project within a complex political environment. Hoxha implemented this code of conduct initiative, hailed by political party officials and several members of the international community, as a result of his ZHUP training.

ZHUP Newsletter

NDI produced a newsletter, highlighting the achievements of ZHUP participants and the development of the program. This first edition included articles written by participants chronicling their political party development projects based on ZHUP training. Distributed to

political party officials and the international and domestic NGO communities, this piece seeks to enhance the position of ZHUP participants within their respective political parties and serve as a communication tool among ZHUP participants. NDI will produce this newsletter on a quarterly basis.

Regional ZHUP preparation

NDI met with political party officials and activists to gather input for the 2001 political party programming. Parties agreed that the ZHUP program should continue based on its success during the past year. The result of these consultations is the development of the Regional ZHUP Program, similar to ZHUP I and II in content but expanded in terms of the number of participants and in geographic scope. The multiparty nature of the training will be enhanced by the participation, as co-trainers, of graduates of the first two rounds of the ZHUP program. Training will be conducted in different towns in each area, and participants from within that area will travel to seminars as necessary. As in previous rounds of the ZHUP Program, participants will be expected to develop concrete ideas for strengthening their parties, and NDI staff will work with them as they implement these projects. NDI submitted this programming in its 2001 proposal, which was approved by USAID.

Civic Forum

During the period, NDI conducted Civic Forum discussion groups on topics related to the role of the Albanian education system in democratic development, human rights in democracy and the role of unions in a democracy.

Field coordinators identified, researched and produced materials for these discussions. They conducted additional discussion groups in urban areas to complement the efforts undertaken in rural settings. Field coordinator exchanges, whereby teams visited areas outside their purview, took place. This “cross-fertilization” of discussion groups provided an opportunity for field coordinators to share training and facilitation techniques. NDI utilized substantial material from past citizen participation programming in Bosnia and the West Bank Gaza.

NDI conducted a citizen survey on opinions related to Albania’s democratic development, the citizens’ role in the democratic process and community views on elected representatives.

Several discussion groups have completed the discussion modules and are ready to move into the advocacy phase of the program. NDI has begun training the field coordinators on issue identification and civic organizing skills development.

Civic Forum provided a venue for citizens to express their opinions about the local election administration and outcome. An overwhelming majority of participants voted and there was general consensus that the elections were well-run despite problems with the voter lists.

NDI distributed 700 copies of the International Republican Institute's *Citizens' Guide to the Parliament* to discussion group participants to provide information on their elected officials.

Training Exchange

NDI Kosovo Resident Representative Koebel Price and Kosovo Field Coordinator Violeta Hamidi traveled to Tirana to assist in training NDI field coordinators. Price and Hamidi took part in advocacy and civic organizing training with the Albanian field coordinators. The group reviewed the basic elements of a community action strategy and focused on the reasons why citizens organize.

Society for Democratic Culture

An NDI consultant assisted SDC during the pre- and post-local election periods as the organization devised its election monitoring effort and public communication strategy. NDI's consultant helped SDC draft its election statement, attached and found on NDI's website (www.ndi.org).

NDI concluded its cooperative agreement with the Society for Democratic Culture on December 31, 2000. NDI worked with SDC on its final programmatic and financial reporting. Both are due for submission in the next reporting period.

IV. RESULTS

- The following ZHUP participants were elected to local offices:

Artur Kurti (PS) – Mayor of Kuçova
Eva Allushaj (PS) – Municipality of Tirana
Etleva Bisha (PS) – Municipality of Tirana
Alban Zusi (PS) – Tirana mini-municipality
Agron Sula (Independent) – Baldushk Commune Council
Ardian Dine (PR) – Municipality of Vlora
Destan Spahiu (PAD) – Municipality of Kukës

- Civic Forum field coordinators identified new topics, researched and devised modules for presentation to discussion groups.

V. EVALUATION

Political Leadership Development Program

In its 2000 workplan, NDI laid out the following objective, indicators and measurements for its Political Leadership Development program:

<i>OBJECTIVE:</i>	A core group of democratically-oriented, emerging political party leaders acquire party organizing skills.
<i>Indicator</i>	ZHUP participants employ the techniques and skills – such as internal communication procedures, negotiation, local branch newsletters – learned from the NDI Resident Representative and trainers.
<i>Measurement</i>	ZHUP participants incorporate these techniques and skills into their required projects.
<i>Indicator</i>	ZHUP participants share information from the program with members of their parties.
<i>Measurement</i>	NDI Resident Representative will record training sessions that ZHUP participants conduct with their colleagues.

NDI's program has had a critical impact among emerging leaders of participating political parties, providing them with innovative and constructive tools to build their political parties, enhance contact with voters and contribute to democratic development in Albania. The local election campaign period clearly demonstrated how the ZHUP Program has enhanced participants' positions within their respective political parties. Several NDI participants had key roles in their election campaigns, using ZHUP training techniques. Participants enacted communication strategies, trained party activists, created newsletters circulated through the mail and on internet websites, and brokered codes of conduct among political parties at the local level.

Eva Allushaj (PS), in her role as head of the public relations department of her party's Tirana branch, designed and produced all the printed campaign material for the 11 Socialist candidates for mayor of the city's "mini-municipalities." As well as posters and leaflets, she prepared locally themed one-page newsletters for all the candidates to distribute in their areas. The Socialists conducted door-to-door canvassing in Tirana, in a move spearheaded by Etleva Bisha (PS). Several other ZHUP participants implemented direct voter contact techniques, including Destan Spahiu (PAD, Kukës), Artur Kurti (PS, Kuçova), Arben Hoxha (United Right, Korça), and Mimoza Hysaj and Tonin çefa (PD, Durrës). Artur Kurti was standing for re-election as mayor of his municipality; he commented: "My campaign this time round was completely different from 1996, I tried to use all the techniques we'd discussed in the ZHUP seminars."

As previously reported, NDI conducted a train-the-trainers seminar to provide participants with the skills necessary to communicate ZHUP techniques to colleagues within the parties. As mentioned in NDI's June 2000 USAID quarterly report, "NDI's cultivation of the ZHUP I participants as trainers in ZHUP II is illustrative of the Institute's commitment to the democratic development of Albania's political parties. These individuals not only become a better resource for their respective political parties, through increased exposure to new and innovative organizing techniques, but also understand and demonstrate a commitment to the idea of a democratic multiparty system. Their willingness to share what they know in a multiparty setting provides an example to participants who may have previously had reservations about working across party lines."

These training skills were also particularly useful in preparations for the local elections. Alma Lahe (Human Rights Party) conducted trainings for her party's candidates and election staff (40 participants) in the south-east of the country, where she was the campaign coordinator; Natasha Paço (PS) provided informal trainings to her party's women candidates; Endrit Kullaj (Republican Party) co-trained with NDI staff a seminar for candidates and election staff (40 participants) from his party; Mimoza Hysaj and Tonin Çefa (PD) organized a series of training seminars for 31 young party activists in the Durrës area; and Najada Balla (Legalitet (PLL)) conducted trainings for 35 PLL pollwatchers in Tirana.

Civic Forum

In its 2000 workplan NDI laid out the following objective, indicator and measurement for its Civic Forum program:

<i>OBJECTIVE:</i>	Citizens at the grassroots level understand and engage in the political process.
<i>Indicator:</i>	Citizens demonstrate an increased level of knowledge and analysis about democratic processes and Albanian government and political structures.
<i>Measurement:</i>	Civic Forum moderators will assess initial knowledge of participants through discussion and informal surveys, and will monitor and record the degree to which participants in 40 discussion groups enhance their knowledge over the course of the program.

During the final quarter of 2000, field coordinators held a review session with more than 60 discussion groups to gauge impressions of the citizen education section of the program. Citizens commented that they were most interested in the topics related to rule of law, constitution and the elements of democracy, and that they valued the information communicated through Civic Forum, especially modules related to the decentralization process. Citizens expressed an increased understanding of and engagement in (through the local elections and interaction with local officials) the political process.

Election Related Activity

NDI submitted an objective, indicator and measurement related to the local elections in its 2000 workplan.

<i>OBJECTIVE:</i>	Political parties and citizens express increased confidence in the process surrounding the elections for local government.
<i>Indicator</i>	Information about conditions relating to local government elections is available and disseminated through public channels to the Albanian political parties and electorate.

Measurement NDI's pre-election assessment report is distributed to Albanian election authorities, Albanian political parties, journalists, U.S. congressional members and interested parties. SDC conducts voter education efforts and, pending funding of a nationwide monitoring effort, prepares a statement on the conduct of local elections.

As previously reported, NDI distributed its assessment report of the pre-election environment to election authorities, political parties, journalists, U.S. congressional members and other interested parties. This report provided constructive recommendations to improve the electoral framework.

The Society for Democratic Culture distributed voter education materials to its branches nationwide. Throughout the pre-election period, NDI distributed voter education materials produced by international and domestic NGOs through its Civic Forum network of discussion groups. These material informed citizens about the voting process and generated discussion on the role of an informed voter.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Civic Forum

In the coming period, NDI will expand its program to include four new field coordinators in one new geographic area (subject to site assessment), contiguous to the programs' current locales. NDI will also continue to convene new discussion groups through its existing networks. NDI anticipates that several discussion groups will move toward the citizen advocacy phase of the program in the coming period.

Political Leadership Development Program

NDI will select participants and begin its Regional ZHUP training program in the first quarter of 2001. This program will extend training to political party activists at the local level and will utilize the expertise of past program participants whom NDI will deploy as trainers.

ATTACHMENTS

1. SDC's Local Election statement
2. Agenda from Political Leadership Development Program ethics seminar
3. ZHUP Newsletter
4. Letter from NDI President Ken Wollack to SDC